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INFOSYSTEMS

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The New Desktops: Mainframe on a What?!

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4th Semiannual Microcomputer Software Review

INFOSYSTEMS

August 1984 Volume 31 Number 8

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Trends

88% of white-collar workers report they are computer literate

Computer literate: One who can use or operate a computer or understand its capabilities.

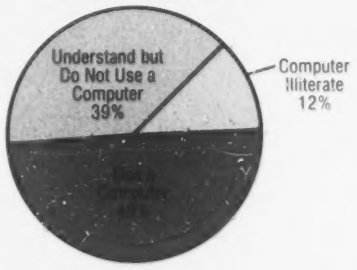
That's the way 88 percent of the white-collar workers polled described themselves in an end-user survey sponsored by Exxon Office Systems, Stamford, CT. Questionnaires were mailed to 5,000 middle managers during the last quarter of 1983; 464 were completed, representing a nine percent return.

Only 10 percent of those polled reported illiteracy. Some 49 percent of respondents use a computer. Another 39 percent have either had some training or are comfortable with their comprehension of a computer's capabilities and applications.

Survey findings also show a direct relationship between degree of computer literacy and positive attitudes about computers. For example, 82 percent of users agree that "computers make my life easier." Almost the same number of nonuser literates supported this evaluation. Forty-three percent of computer illiterates, however, thought computers made their lives easier.

People who use computers tend to use them frequently and for a broad mix of applications, according to the study. Seventy-eight percent of those who said they use computers use them daily; 19 percent use them weekly; and 3 percent use them less than once a week.

Users vs. Non-Users

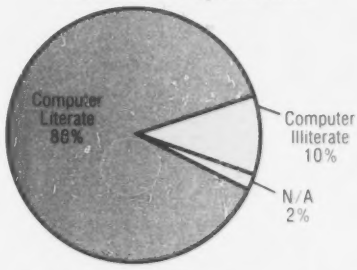


Source: Exxon Office Systems

Of the environments studied, computers are used heaviest in traditional data processing tasks such as inventory control. They are also being put to work in office automation tasks such as word processing and electronic mail.

While users and nonusers seem to have positive attitudes toward the computer, some negative attitudes are found more frequently among nonusers. For example, nonusers were twice as likely as users to say "computers terrify me," although the percentages in this group were very low (4 and 2 percent, respectively). More nonusers also agreed that "computers seem dehumanizing" (34 versus 24 percent). Three times as many nonusers expressed "computers are not for me" or "not for senior executives."

Profile of Respondents



Other negative attitudes are more likely to be held by users. Sixteen percent think "computers cause stress," while only 10 percent of nonusers hold this belief. More users found computers "difficult to adjust to, boring or distracting."

The most frequently cited sources for computer training are self-study through manuals (31 percent), training programs at work (28 percent), college (24 percent), the computer manufacturer (23 percent), coworkers (22 percent), the computer itself (12 percent) and a friend (5 percent). Sixty-four percent of nonusers who received computer training don't actually use a computer at work.

The study also found identical percentages of computer users in the 31 to 40 age group and the 41 to 50 age group (54 percent). There is also a similarity between the levels of computer use in companies with more than 500 employees (51 percent use) and companies with less than 500 employees (48 percent use).

"Older managers as well as younger managers are pursuing and using computer knowledge," the study concluded. "In short, the people factor is at work." WJC

Management

'If it doesn't work, try something else'

"Expert communicators are flexible, not rigid," says Houston-based psychotherapist Dr. John Bradshaw. "Remember, the part of the system which is most flexible will control the system. So if what you're doing doesn't work, try something else."

Bradshaw, who led two lively sessions on motivation and personal interaction at the recent Independent Computer Consultants Assn. meeting in Houston, had a warning for managers. "No matter what you intend, the meaning of your communication is reflected by the response you're getting," he says.

"To communicate well, you have to enter the other person's model of the world. But language often gets in the way of communicating because we mean different things by the same words," says Bradshaw.

"Eloquence is using power and not having other people know you're doing it. It's a sign of insecurity when someone has to keep saying, 'I'm the boss.' The greatest bosses know how to be eloquent," says Bradshaw. —CTT

Personnel biggest budget share, problem

Data processing (DP) budgets are on the rise in US corporations this year, according to a recent survey of Data Processing Management Assn. (DPMA) members.

A DPMA corporate newsletter, *COMP-U-FAX*, reports that 73.7 percent of those surveyed have higher budgets than they did last year. This is the first time such a survey has been conducted.

The average DP budget for 1984 was $1,638,582 or 2.46 percent of the total corporate budget. DPMA members believe this figure should be increased to 3 to 5 percent.

Personnel accounted for the largest share of the DP budget at 44 percent. Large systems represented 26 percent while micros accounted for only 6 percent. DP managers reported that software constituted 12 percent of their budget. The remainder consisted of maintenance and training at 9 percent and 3 percent, respectively.

DP professionals indicated that personnel is also their biggest budget problem. A majority of the respondents urged top management to provide incentives to boost morale. —WJC

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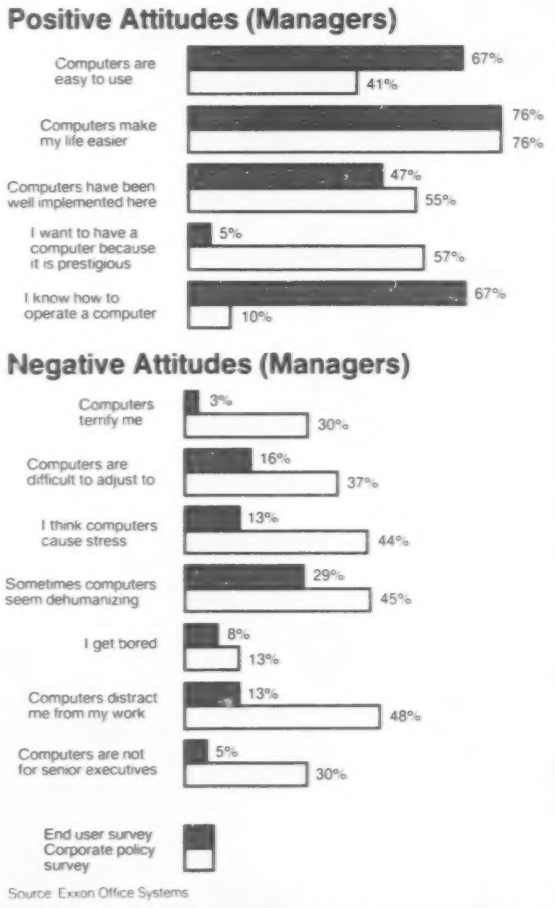
Computer Literacy

Information revolution moving too fast for companies to assess

The information revolution is progressing so rapidly that many offices have not had the chance to systematically assess their own automation processes. As a result, corporate training representatives underestimate the level of computer literacy among white-collar workers and overestimate the barriers preventing their personnel from learning.

These are some of the major conclusions of a corporate policy survey administered by phone to nearly 100 trainers at Fortune 500 service companies. In most cases, the contact person at the corporation was in the management information systems (MIS) area and was frequently involved in both hands-on and conceptual computer training.

End User versus Corporate Policy Profile



Source: Exxon Office Systems

This study and a concurrent poll drawn from a random sample of 5,000 middle managers were carried out by the Omni Group in conjunction with Exxon Office Systems, Stamford, CT. End users were asked for their perceptions on computer literacy. Interestingly, their responses conflicted with the corporate group's assessment in many cases.

Corporate trainers overall estimated that less than 10

percent of managers know how to use a computer when 67 percent say they have that skill. They also predicted that only 41 percent of managers would agree that computers are easy to use; 67 percent did.

Fifty-seven percent of managers would not want a computer "because it's prestigious," as the corporate group guessed. Only five percent complied with that theory.

Concerning negative attitudes, corporate representatives predicted 30 percent of managers would agree with the statement "computers terrify me;" only three percent did. Similarly, they said 37 percent would say computers are difficult to adjust to. Sixteen percent voiced this concern.

"Once people learn how to use computers, they tend to make good use of them to enhance productivity," the study notes. "And the more often these people use computers, the faster the barriers and negative attitudes fade away." —WJC

Microcomputers

Rehfeld of Toshiba says Japan not likely to take over market

In the microcomputer shakeout war—which some say has begun—a few Japanese companies like Toshiba, NEC and Fujitsu will secure market niches without capturing a dominant market share. This was the message that Vice President & General Manager John Rehfeld of Toshiba America Inc., Tustin, CA, gave attendees at a recent International Data Corp. conference in San Francisco.

"America may no longer own the computer business, but neither is it in danger of losing its technological domination to Japan," said Rehfeld. He illustrated his point by tracing the history of Japanese success in several key areas, including the 8-bit CP/M microcomputer market.

"The Japanese failed miserably in the minicomputer market in the '70s and also performed poorly in the 8-bit CP/M microcomputer market," Rehfeld said. "In the IBM-compatible 16-bit MS-DOS market, the jury is still out."

Meanwhile, there have also been some notable successes, particularly in the areas of aftermarket products such as printers and monitors and in the semiconductor sector. Rehfeld predicts that Japan will show strong technological leadership in the future not only in semiconductors, but in optical disks, communications equipment, miniaturization, voice recognition, laser technology, optical communication and applied controls and robotics.

Why have Japanese firms done poorly in their efforts to market computer systems under their own names in the US market? Rehfeld thinks it's largely because they are accustomed to manufacturing products with long life cycles, such as automobiles, cameras, consumer electronics and printers.

"The Japanese have been hard put to keep up with the high rate of technological innovation in the American computer market," said Rehfeld. "They're accustomed to having much more time to refine and evolve their products."

Rehfeld acknowledged that competition between the two countries is an "emotional subject," particularly for the semiconductor sector. But he maintained that it's good for the consumer to have worldwide competition.

The data processing world has already seen one example of how Japanese competition has helped it, noted Rehfeld. "The IBM-compatible products from Fujitsu and Hitachi have forced IBM to make many price/performance improvements during the last 10 years," he concluded. "And this trend will continue to grow in the years ahead." —WLM

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